

PRAY THE BOOK

PRAYER GUIDE





INTRODUCTION

Sanctuary Covenant Church is a community of people with a diversity of gifting, personalities, and experiences. We all have a different progression in our relationship to and with God, and that will be reflected in our journey with prayer. We approach and engage with God in prayer from a variety of postures, in a diversity of ways, and in every kind of circumstance in life. We connect relationally with God when we come to him authentically in prayer with the fullness of our emotions and being.

Every January as a church, we commit to the practice and discipline of prayer. The Month of Prayer has become an opportunity for us as a community to begin the year centered in God's presence and will through prayer. This year, we will explore four different journeys with prayer in Scripture. We will together reflect upon how God's people have encountered and engaged with Him in prayer and consider how we can be encouraged in our own journey with prayer. We will have the opportunity through this guide to orient ourselves and our prayer lives around God's Word and to "pray the Book" together. When it comes to what it is to be people of prayer, we will explore the rich examples and invitations to pray that God provides for us in the Bible.

If we are people of the Book, we are people of prayer.

WEEK ONE:
HANNAH

07

M8

T9

January 7-13

1 Samuel 1-2:11

READ:

1 Samuel 1:1-18

REFLECT:

Hannah is motivated by her deep anguish to go to God in prayer. As a woman in her time and culture, her value and purpose came from her ability to bear children. Her pain is not just the heartache of a desire unfilled, but it is also riddled with social and cultural shame. To add salt to the wound, she receives verbal abuse from one in her own home. Can you identify with Hannah? Have you been in a place of deep anguish, shame, and woundedness? Reflect upon your first response at those times. Is your inclination to go to God in prayer or to retreat from Him? Has shame and abuse from others affected your ability to feel like you could approach God? Allow Hannah's vulnerability in prayer to be an encouragement.

PRAY & RESPOND:

Ask God to help you identify ways in which shame, anguish, or wounds have hindered your movement toward prayer. Ask the Spirit to help you believe how, as God's child, you can approach Him with complete honesty. Take a moment to openly share with God in prayer the fullness of your emotions in what you are experiencing today.

READ:

1 Samuel 1:19-20

REFLECT:

God did not react to Hannah's display of emotion in prayer with annoyance, frustration, or disappointment. He responded by demonstrating that He saw her deep pain and desire by answering the fullness of her request. While God does not always give us specifically what we ask for, what is encouraging about God's response to Hannah's emotional plea? Consider if you have thought at times that your emotions may be off-putting to God. Reflect upon what it means that God does not move away from Hannah, but remains close.

PRAY & RESPOND:

Ask the Spirit to search your heart and help you see if there are ways you are holding back in prayer. Are you not being fully honest with God because you feel He would disprove, be disappointed, or even angry with you? Take a moment to allow yourself to be fully honest with God, knowing that your honesty and openness in prayer does not push God away and is often where He draws near.

READ:

1 Samuel 1:21-28

REFLECT:

Hannah receives from God the exact answer to her prayer. God has provided in a way that alleviates her personal anguish and social shame. And instead of clinging to and claiming God's gift as her own, she responds by offering her son back to God. We can be quick to hang onto the good things God gives us, especially after we have labored in prayer. Consider the ways God has answered prayers in your life with His good provision and gifts. How do you currently hold those things?

PRAY & RESPOND:

Take a moment to write down some specific ways God has answered prayers in your life—whether they be your prayers or the prayers of others on your behalf. As you look at this list, prayerfully consider if you have been hoarding God's gifts and claiming them as your own. Ask God to help you hold those things with open hands. Ask the Spirit to help you know what it may look like for you to offer those things back to God. Respond by making one tangible step in releasing something back to God.

W10

T11

F12

S13

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READ:

1 Samuel 2:1-11

REFLECT:

Here are two very different approaches to prayer from Hannah. Her first prayer is rooted in pain and desperation as she makes a request of God. Her second prayer comes from a place of joy, thanksgiving, and praise. There is no one way that we have to pray. If anything, our prayers can be as diverse and unique as our experiences and feelings. Consider if you feel beholden to a specific formula for prayer. Have you been taught there is a specific way to approach God? Do you feel like you must frame your prayers in a specific way? Do you try to pull yourself together before you pray or do you feel the need to speak in a way that is unnatural for you? Consider Hannah’s two very different prayers and allow yourself to feel the freedom to engage with God without filtering or putting on. Are there ways you can be freed in prayer?

PRAY & RESPOND:

Ask God to remove any barriers you have when it comes to how you engage in prayer. Pray you may be able to clearly discern human-made boundaries around how you come to God in prayer. Give thanks to God for the freedom we have in approaching Him.

READ:

Luke 22:39-46

REFLECT:

Hannah is not the only one in Scripture who chose prayer when she was in a place of anguish. Jesus himself turned to the Father when experiencing intense distress. The Son of God brought the fullness of His emotions before God in prayer to the point that His physical body sweated blood. Consider again honestly if and how you may at times avoid prayer because you feel you have to pull yourself together, clean yourself up, or get into a better state of mind. Reflect on if you avoid prayer at times when you are experiencing an especially difficult time and why that may be.

PRAY & RESPOND:

Take a moment to give thanks for how this story about Jesus gives us permission and freedom to bring anything before God... and that we can do so with full emotion! Allow a few minutes of quiet meditation to give the Spirit space to show you how Jesus’ posture here can inform your own current prayer life.

READ:

Nehemiah 1

REFLECT:

Prayer and fasting go hand-in-hand throughout Scripture. Upon hearing news that greatly distresses him, Nehemiah responds with prayer and fasting. He approaches God honestly in His deep sadness and grief and creates the space for physical and mental dependence upon God. As you read his prayer (verses 5-11), what do you see in his posture and heart? What does Nehemiah express about God’s character and nature?

PRAY & RESPOND:

As you fast today, write down what is bringing you any distress, grief, or sadness in this season. Then reflect on what stood out to you from Nehemiah’s prayer. Take time to honestly pray to God out of your own space of struggle or mourning. Allow the Spirit to guide your prayer, and ask that your dependence on God would increase especially in the spaces where you are currently holding grief and sorrow.

READ:

Psalms 6

REFLECT:

The Psalms are filled with examples of what it looks like to pray to God openly and honestly with the fullness of emotion. Read through Psalm 6 slowly and deliberately (out loud if you are able). Pay attention to what emotions rise up in you and which words and images bring them up. Return to those words and phrases and spend time in meditation. What is the Spirit bringing to your mind, stirring up in you, speaking to you? Pause to reflect and listen.

PRAY & RESPOND:

Write your own prayer using the following prompts from Psalm 6:

Have mercy on me, Lord, for I...
Heal me, Lord, for I...
My soul is...
Save me because...
I am worn out from...
The Lord has heard my...
The Lord accepts my...

WEEK TWO:
DAVID

S14

M15

T16

January 14-20

2 Samuel 12:1-23 & Psalm 51

READ:

2 Samuel 12:1-17

REFLECT:

King David's violence against both Bathsheba and Uriah were crimes and sins against God and against the entire nation. We don't see David feeling convicted or moving toward confession and repentance... until God sends Nathan. Nathan arrives with a very pointed story and the news of the upcoming consequences of his horrific acts. As David must face the first set of consequences of his sin, only then does he move into fasting and prayer. His posture of prayer is driven by him having to deal with the brutal consequences of his own sins. Are there times when you were driven to prayer because you were dealing with the consequences of your own sinful actions, words, or behaviors? What do you think David's prayed as he pleaded for God to spare His son? What have your own prayers been like at those times?

PRAY & RESPOND:

Reflect upon and thank God that when we are in the midst of dealing with our own sin and consequences that we can still engage honestly with him in prayer. Ask the Spirit to help you identify if there are areas where you need to take ownership of the consequences of your sin. Ask God to help you move into a posture of humility and true confession.

READ:

2 Samuel 12:18-23

REFLECT:

Unlike with Hannah, God does not answer David's prayer as requested. He must contend with this consequence of his sin. Even though God does not answer in the way he pleaded, David regroupes and moves into worship. Instead of wallowing in sin's consequences or hiding from God in shame, he moves toward Him. When you have been caught in your sin, do you try to isolate from God? How are humility and seeking God a part of the path of repentance?

PRAY & RESPOND:

Ask the Spirit to help you identify if there are ways you are trying to keep distance between you and God so you don't need to confess or repent of sinful patterns or habits. Take the time to honestly pause and consider. Ask God to help you see those things clearly and to help you move toward Him on a path of true repentance.

READ:

Psalm 51

REFLECT:

According to tradition, this Psalm was written by David as he dealt with the consequences of his sin against Bathsheba and Uriah. Note what David expresses in prayer regarding his sin. Write down those words and phrases. What do you see about the nature of sin? Do you identify Can you understand how he is feeling about his sin and how it has affected him and others? Often, we want to bypass considering the nature of our sin and how it affects others. But allow yourself to take this time. Grasping the implications of our sin can serve as a wonderful reminder of our need for God and the power and beauty of His grace and mercy toward us.

PRAY & RESPOND:

As you consider your own sin and how it has impacted others, take time in prayer to confess those sins to God. Be specific in naming them. Ask the Spirit to show you who you may need to go to and confess. Ask the Spirit to help you see where you may need to seek reconciliation. Then consider how the sins of others have impacted you. Be specific in naming those to God as well. Ask the Spirit to help you know what it looks like to move toward forgiveness and healing.

W17

T18

F19

S20

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READ:

Psalms 51

REFLECT:

As you read David’s Psalm today, take note of what he says about joy and deliverance. David says a lot about the nature of sin, but he also expresses hope and freedom from sin in his prayer. Write those words and phrases down. As you reflect upon those truths, which ones resonate with you the most? Which words or phrases bring you the most encouragement and hope? Are there ways in which you need these truths to inform your own thinking and behaviors?

PRAY & RESPOND:

Spend time in prayer thanking God for His mercy and compassion toward sinners. In prayer note specifically how His mercy and compassion have impacted you. If you are feeling as if these truths are not helpful for you, ask the Spirit to help you see where you are being held captive by sin and its consequences. If you need to reach out to someone for prayer and conversation, please email hello@sanctuarycov.org. We would love to connect with you.

READ:

Romans 5:1-11

REFLECT:

Our sin causes us to be separated from God. Nothing we could ever do ourselves could repair that brokenness. Because of our sin we shouldn’t even be able to move toward God and engage with Him in prayer. But thanks be to God that He has done the work in order to bring reconciliation. Reflect on all the different ways this passage conveys what God has done to repair our broken relationship with Him. How may remembering these specific truths affect the way in which you engage God in prayer - especially when you may be wrestling with sin and its consequences? How can these truths inform your posture of prayer?

PRAY & RESPOND:

Take time to thank God in prayer specifically for the truths in Romans 5. Read and meditate upon the passage again. Allow the Spirit and the Scripture to guide your prayers of thanksgiving.

READ:

Jonah 3

REFLECT:

Like David, the Ninevehites were not moved to confession and repentance until God broke in with a message from one of His servants. The Ninevehites also moved into a posture of fasting and prayer to plead with God for mercy when facing their sin and its consequences. Fasting and prayer together are key ways that as God’s children we can respond to the conviction of our sin and move on the path of repentance. Why do you think in both of these instances that fasting is a part of confession and repentance? As you fast today are there ways God may be calling you to confess and repent of certain sins?

PRAY & RESPOND:

Ask God to help you see yourself and your sin more clearly and give you a desire to truly repent. As you fast today, pray that you would grasp more deeply your need for God to rescue and deliver you.

READ:

Psalms 32

REFLECT:

As you read through this Psalm, note the two phrases that stand out to you the most. Take extra time to meditate on those two phrases. Why did they jump out to you? How do they make you feel? What may it look like to allow them to inform your prayers and thinking? Allow them to marinate in your mind and heart. Take time to pause and let them settle in.

PRAY & RESPOND:

As you pray today, try to change up your usual posture. If you usually sit still at this point, try going for a walk as you pray. If you usually have to be moving, try being still. If you usually write, try talking out loud instead. Consider a different way to engage in prayer and open yourself up to what may be or feel different. Go to God in prayer with the two phrases that stuck out to you the most from Psalm 32. Continue to meditate upon them, and ask the Spirit to guide you in prayer as you continue to reflect upon your own sin and God’s forgiveness and mercy.

WEEK THREE:
ANNA

S21

M22

T23

January 21-27

Luke 2:36-40

READ:

Luke 2:36-37

REFLECT:

Anna lived in a time and place of political turmoil, religious persecution, economic instability, and harsh living conditions. As a woman, Anna's best chance for basic security and provision was through a husband. When Anna was widowed after only seven years, she became vulnerable, marginalized by race, religion, age, and social status. In her, we see an incredible depth of character and a rich faith as she chooses to offer up her life in devotion to God with fasting and prayer. When you consider the layers of challenges Anna faced in her life, does her path surprise you? Do you (or do you see others) pull away from engaging with God in prayer because of the difficulties that you are facing? Does Anna's devotion to God encourage you or challenge you? Reflect upon why.

PRAY & RESPOND:

Ask God to help you identify the desire to pull away from Him when things in life become challenging. Consider why that may be. As you consider Anna's commitment to prayer and fasting, ask the Spirit to search your heart and mind to help you begin to see what may be holding you back from a more vibrant and fervent devotion.

READ:

Luke 2:36-40

REFLECT:

Worship, prayer, and fasting were not occasional parts of Anna's life. They weren't things she engaged in simply once a week or month, or when the opportunity conveniently arose. Worship, prayer, and fasting were her life. Anna didn't fit prayer into the rhythms of her life; her life was oriented around prayer. Her life of prayer and fasting prepared her to see where and how God was moving around her. Anna knew this was the long-awaited Messiah. Has prayer cultivated a sensitivity to God's movement and activity? Do you feel like you may be missing what God is doing because of your neglect of engaging with Him relationally in prayer? Consider how you could begin pursuing a deeper rhythm of prayer.

PRAY & RESPOND:

Spend some time with God honestly assessing your current devotion to prayer. Confess where this is a challenge not just in your rhythms but also in your own heart and mind. Pray for the Spirit to give you a greater desire to engage with God in prayer in a way that cultivates a rich faith and sensitivity to the Spirit and God's work.

READ:

1 Samuel 1:21-28

REFLECT:

Consider the following questions. It may be helpful to write down your thoughts to help solidify what God is revealing as you reflect upon what a richer prayer life may look like for you.

- What does it mean to be devoted to prayer? If you are stuck, start with thinking about Anna,
- What could increased devotion look like? Where do you desire change?
- Anna's prayer life made her ready to see God working. Colossians 4:2 connects prayer with "being watchful." How does commitment to prayer connect with being watchful? How do you desire to see more clearly?
- Anna's response upon seeing Jesus is prayers of thanksgiving. Colossians 4:2 also notes that in devotion to prayer we should be "thankful." Why do you think thankfulness should be part of our rhythm of prayer?

PRAY & RESPOND:

As you consider how your life could be more oriented around prayer, what do you notice? Take some time to pray over that specific area and ask the Spirit for what you need. End your time by giving thanks for the ways prayer has been a vital and rich part of your life so far.

W24

T25

F26

S27

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READ:

Luke 18:1-8

REFLECT:

Anna is an incredible example of what it is to always pray and never give up. Jesus shared this parable with His disciples “to show them that they should always pray and not give up.” Even while they were doing life with the Son of God, Jesus knew His friends and followers needed this specific encouragement. As you consider this parable, think about the challenges with being committed to prayer, what do you think keeps you from always praying? Are there times when you have wanted to give up in prayer for something or someone? Reflect on Jesus’ words of encouragement to not give up in prayer.

PRAY & RESPOND:

Ask the Spirit to help you overcome what is hindering you from prayer. Name those things to God and ask for His help. Also, in prayer honestly express to God if there is anything you are wanting to give up praying for. Ask the Spirit to guide your prayers for those things that are the most difficult.

READ:

Luke 22:39-46

REFLECT:

Anna’s devotion to prayer prepared her to be ready to recognize and meet the Messiah. In today’s passage we see Daniel’s devotion to prayer prepares him to remain steady and faithful to God in the midst of a fearful and dangerous situation. Reflect on the connection between a devotion to prayer and being prepared for what is in the future. What is cultivated relationally with God through engaging in healthy rhythms of prayer? In what ways can you see prayer preparing you to see God working around you? How do you think prayer can cultivate a grounded faith and trust in God for those unforeseen challenges and struggles?

PRAY & RESPOND:

Reflect upon if you have experienced intimacy with God through prayer as helping you be ready for what comes your way. Note specifically times when that has happened and spend time thanking God. Ask the Spirit to help you engage with God in prayer in a way that genuinely builds up your faith, your trust in God, and your intimacy with Him.

READ:

Matthew 4:1-11

REFLECT:

As Jesus was about to step into ministry, He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. He was brought to a place of isolation with less distractions as He fasted and experienced temptation. This week we have seen how devotion to prayer can heighten sensitivity to what God is doing and prepare God’s people for what is ahead. Why do you think the Spirit had Jesus take this time to fast as He was about to begin His ministry? What does this convey about how vital fasting and prayer are preparation for what God has called us to? Are there things you know are ahead for you that may be good reasons to prioritize focused prayer and fasting? Can you create space for that?

PRAY & RESPOND:

Converse with God in prayer about what He is calling you to and preparing you for. With the help of the Spirit, prayerfully make a plan for what it may look like for you to carve out the time and space to fast and pray for some of the things that are potentially on the horizon. Rely on the Spirit’s guidance.

READ:

Psalms 34

REFLECT:

This Psalm encourages us to engage with God in various ways. Read through this Psalm three times, noting the following:

- The first time, write down or underline words and phrases that are invitations or commands regarding how to pray or seek God.
- The second time, write down or underline twice the different things we can take to God in prayer.
- The third time, write down or circle the different things God can provide for His children.

Being devoted to prayer is not a chore or a burden. Engaging with God in prayer and cultivating a healthy relationship with Him is a gift, a blessing, and a privilege. In what ways has this Psalm helped you feel encouraged to be more committed to prayer?

PRAY & RESPOND:

Read through Psalm 34 one more time. Pause after each verse and allow the Spirit to guide your time of prayer. Allow God’s Word to inform your prayers, to bring things to mind, and to direct your heart.

**WEEK FOUR:
ELISHA &
SERVANT**

S28

M29

T30

**January 28-
February 3**

2 Kings 6:8-23

READ:

2 Kings 6:8-17

REFLECT:

Elisha was known as the “man of God,” appointed as prophet and sought after for insight, wisdom, and guidance. As the Aramites prepared to attack, valid fear arose in Elisha’s servant and he see couldn’t see God clearly. Have you experienced the feeling of being surrounded or pursued by a tangible danger. Engage those feelings, whether they be from your own experience or that of Elisha’s servant. It can be difficult to see past threats when surrounded and to have perspective in moments when we are pressed upon and feel paralyzed in fear. Elisha prays, “Open his eyes, Lord, so that he may see.” Do you go to prayer in times of fear? What do you pray? There are many ways we can go to God in prayer when we are experiencing fear. Consider if you pray for God to open your eyes to see Him in the midst of your fear.

PRAY & RESPOND:

Think of when you last experienced fear, maybe even right now. In prayer, ask God to help you see where He is with you. Take time to give thanks for God’s faithfulness through dangers and threats in the past.

READ:

2 Kings 6:17

REFLECT:

Fear is powerful. Whether our fears are tangible or of our own creation, it can be overwhelming and our fear can feel more powerful than anything or anyone else. Even those of us who know Jesus can fix our eyes on our fears and give them more power over us than we should. But for us who know Christ, there is no fear that has power greater than that of our resurrected Savior. Reflect upon struggles with fear and where you may be forgetting the power of Christ. When have you believed that what is against you and for your destruction is greater than the God who is for you? Where do you need to embrace that, in Christ, the power and love that is for you is greater than what is against you, even today?

PRAY & RESPOND:

Ask the Spirit to reveal where you put more stock in what is against you—against your healing, your flourishing, your growth in Christ, and more. In prayer, explore where you give opposition and the enemy more power than that of God’s power to protect, to bring freedom, to heal, etc. Ask God to help you wholly believe that His power is always greater.

READ:

1 Samuel 1:21-28

REFLECT:

The relationship Elisha had with God readied him for this specific situation and guided his prayers. Our relationship with God and how we are fueling it will impact the nature of our prayers when we are put in intense and challenging situations. While God does not need Elisha to pray these things in order for Him to handle the enemies, we have a God who delights in involving His children. Prayer is a way that we engage with God relationally as He guides us through this life. Reflect on how you seek God throughout your day to day. Contemplate the connection between your relationship with God and the nature of your prayers - especially your prayers when you are in unforeseen and challenging situations.

PRAY & RESPOND:

Ask God to help you draw the connection between regular rhythms of seeking Him and your prayer life. Also take time to ask the Spirit to help you see how He has given you guidance, discernment, and wisdom in how you pray.

W31

T1

F2

S3

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READ:

Ephesians 1:15-22

REFLECT:

In his letter to the church in Ephesus, the apostle Paul offers deep spiritual insight and encouragement in how he is led to pray for God’s people. Paul is committed to praying for greater understanding, vision and clarity, and a stronger grasp of the power of the resurrected Christ. Like Elisha, Paul is praying for others to be able to see more clearly and to have a greater perspective of God’s power. As you consider the story of Elisha and his servant as well as Paul’s focus in prayer, what are the specific ways you desire for God to grow you in these areas? Read through today’s passage again, this time noting what specific phrases capture you. Take time to meditate upon those words and phrases and give time for the Spirit to speak.

PRAY & RESPOND:

Read through Ephesians 1:15-22 one more time, but this time ask the Spirit to allow it to inform your own prayers for what you need. Ask the Spirit to guide you and call things to mind through the text. Take a moment to give thanks for the portions of this passage that bring you encouragement and reassurances today.

READ:

Psalms 25

REFLECT:

This Psalm gives beautiful language for addressing fear, reaffirming truth, and asking God for greater understanding and insight. As you read through this Psalm consider choosing a different posture. Try reading out loud or sing the words, change your body position, or write all the words out on a separate piece of paper. Pay attention to what words or phrases stand out to you. Notice how making a few tweaks in your posture or position changes how you engage with the text.

PRAY & RESPOND:

Write your own prayer using the following prompts from Psalm 25:

Lord, show me your...
Guide me in...
According to your love, remember...
All Your ways are...
Forgive me...
Take away my...
Guard my...
My hope is...
Deliver me, O God, from...

READ:

2 Chronicles 20:1-12

REFLECT:

The fear of Jehoshaphat and the people is almost palpable in this passage. Yet, as soon as he heard this news, Jehoshaphat was “resolved to inquire of the Lord.” When fear arises, we can allow our emotions to take over, to fully panic, or to make a run for it... or we too can resolve to seek God. Fasting and praying communally for God’s direction and provision is a powerful way to respond in the face of fear. How could fasting be a good response to some of the fears you are contending with? Could others join in with you? As you fast today, consider you could you practice it when you are dealing with threats and fears.

PRAY & RESPOND:

Note the simplicity of Jehoshaphat’s posture and prayer. Pray using his flow:

- Praise God for specific aspects of His character.
- Give thanks for ways He has acted on your behalf in the past.
- Express current concerns and fears, why you specifically need Him, and your desire to see Him work and act.
- With open hands and heart pray: “We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.”

READ:

John 17:20-26

REFLECT:

As our Month of Prayer comes to close, take time to reflect on what God has been impressing upon your heart and mind. What has God demonstrated to you about Himself? What have you learned about yourself? Are there specific rhythms or changes you are wanting to put into practice? Take time to look back over the weeks and passages and try to note 2-3 key takeaways.

PRAY & RESPOND:

In today’s passage, Jesus prays for us to not be alone, so make an effort to not be alone in how you are growing and engaging with God in prayer. Seek someone out to pray with or pray for you regarding what you desire to grow based on our journey with prayer this past month. You could even share with someone you already pray with. If you are unsure who to share with, take time to ask the Spirit to prompt your heart and give you direction. If no one comes to mind, consider speaking with a Prayer Team member at Sanctuary following either morning service and have them pray for you. Please include others in the body of Christ in what God is doing and working in your prayer life.

APPENDIX ONE: PREPARING TO FAST

WHY DO PEOPLE FAST IN THE BIBLE?

- When seeking God's guidance and movement (Judg. 20:26; 2 Sam. 12:14-16; Est. 4:16; Dan. 10:3; Acts 13:2-3; 14:23)
 - As an act of repentance (1 Sam. 7:6; Dan. 9:3-5; Jonah 3:7-10; Joel 2:12-13)
 - As part of the grieving process (1 Sam. 31:13; 2 Sam. 1:12; Neh. 1:1-4)
 - When in a posture of humility and worship (1 Kings 21:27-29; Matt. 6:16-18; Luke 2:37; Acts 10:30; 1 Cor. 7:5)
 - When seeking deliverance and protection (2 Chr. 20:3-4; Ezra 8:21-23)
- Preparing for God's work and plan (Ex. 34:28; Neh. 1:3-4; Isa. 58:3-7; Matt. 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-14)

WHY ARE WE FASTING DURING THE MONTH OF PRAYER?

Prayer and fasting go hand-in-hand in Scripture. As we posture ourselves for prayer this month, setting aside time to fast is a way for us to intentionally practice prayer together. Fasting is an act of worship that helps us become more aware of our need for God and cultivates space to hear from him as we deny ourselves and remove distractions. Fasting as a community is an opportunity for us to seek God's heart and transformative work together.

WHAT SHOULD YOU FAST FROM?

A traditional fast is abstaining from food. Food, in particular, is a basic need and fasting from food reminds us that we need God more than even our next meal. Our hunger pangs remind us to turn our eyes to the One who sustains us. However, we understand that fasting from food for 24 hours is not wise for everyone. If you have concerns about whether fasting from food is safe for you, ask your physician first, especially if you have a health concern. If you are able to fast from solid food and you decide to, remember to drink plenty of water (or other fluids)!

If fasting from solid food is not a wise decision for you, consider what you may safely fast from instead. What would be a challenge? What could encourage you to rely fully on God? What would clear out distractions? Possible things to consider: Sugar, caffeine, certain types of foods, TV, social media, phone, certain activities, etc. What could you leave behind for 24 hours that would increase your dependence upon God and help cultivate space to be present with him?

Share what you are fasting from with someone in our community to encourage each other!

APPENDIX TWO: RESOURCE GUIDE

ADDITIONAL PRAYER GUIDES

- Week of Prayer Guide: <https://covchurch.org/resources/week-of-prayer>
- Prayer Models and Guides: <https://21days.churchofthehighlands.com/resources>

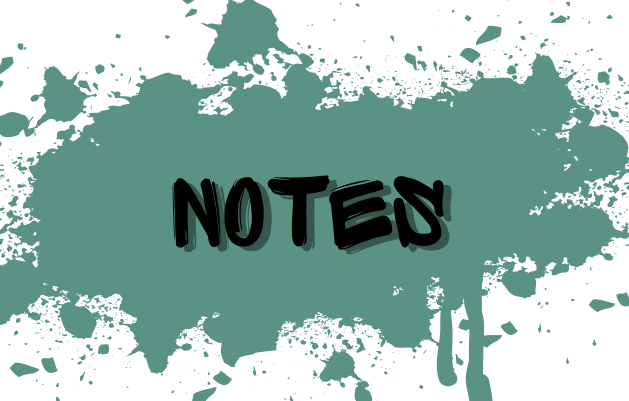
BOOKS ON PRAYER

- *Blessed is She: The Transforming Prayer Journeys of 30 African American Women* // Victoria McAfee
- *Could You Not Tarry An Hour?* // Larry Lea
- *Face To Face: Praying the Scriptures Series* // Kenneth Boa
- *Listening for God* // Renita J. Weems
- *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* // Richard Foster
- *Praying Backwards: Transform Your Prayer Life by Beginning in Jesus' Name* // Bryan Chapell
- *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation* // Ruth Haley Barton

PRAYER AT SANCTUARY

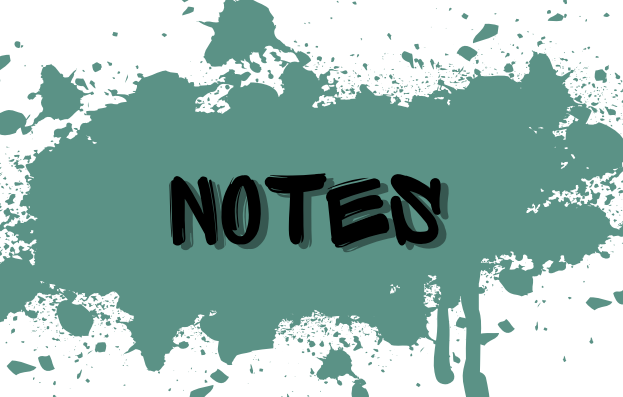
Online Prayer Gatherings: Saturdays at 10 am - Link available on website and in the Wire

Sanctuary Prayer Team available at the altar following Sunday worship services



NOTES

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



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